

United States Department of Agriculture



NEWS RELEASE

One Credit Union Place, Ste. 340, Harrisburg, PA 17110 * (717)237-2100 * www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA Will Restore and Protect Flood-Prone Lands with Economic Recovery Funding

CONTACT: Molly McDonough 717-237-2208

HARRISBURG, PA, March 12, 2009 —The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide up to \$145 million to eligible landowners nationwide through the floodplain easement component of its Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. The funds will be used to restore an estimated 60,000 acres of frequently flooded land to its natural state and create jobs.

"We will be working with landowners who voluntarily agree to restore the floodplains to their natural condition by placing their land into easements," said Gary Smith, Pennsylvania Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Assistant State Conservationist. "Eligible landowners throughout Pennsylvania can sign up for these easements now through March 27, 2009 at their local NRCS field office."

Eligible lands are those in all watersheds that meet the following criteria:

- Lands must have been damaged by flooding at least twice in the previous ten years, or at least once in the last 12 months, or lands that would be inundated or adversely impacted as a result of a dam breach.
- Lands must be privately owned, or owned by state or local units of government. Federally owned lands are not eligible for enrollment.

Landowners who are interested in having mill dams removed, or who are in the emergency action plan area for land and buildings downstream of any dam, may be eligible to apply. Land does not have to have buildings or structures on it to be eligible.

The funding, obtained from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, includes both technical and financial assistance to restore the easements. All funds will be spent on targeted projects that can be completed with economic stimulus monies. The goal is to have all floodplain

easements acquired and restored within 12-18 months. No more than \$30 million can be spent in any one state.

The restored floodplains will generate many public benefits, such as increased flood protection, enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, improved water quality, and a reduced need for future public disaster assistance. Other benefits include reduced energy consumption when certain agricultural activities and practices are eliminated and increased carbon sequestration as permanent vegetative cover is re-established.

Landowners interested in submitting applications can get additional information by contacting a local USDA NRCS Service Center, found in your local telephone book, or on-line at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/>. For more information about EWP Program floodplain easements, please visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/Floodplain/index.html>.

#

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.